

Municipality of Anchorage



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PO Box 390
Girdwood, Alaska 99587
<http://www.muni.org>
Mark Begich, Mayor

GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Tracey Knutson, Chair;
Victor Duncan, Jim Henderson, John Gallup, Nick Danger

December 27, 2005

Mr. John Tolley, Planning Director Alaska DOT/PF- Hand delivered
P.O. Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900

Mr. Jeff Otteson, Deputy Commissioner Alaska DOT/PF – Faxed and mailed
3132 Channel Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-7898

Subject: Include in STIP Seward Highway Improvements Girdwood to Anchorage

Dear Sirs:

On behalf of the Community of Girdwood and by resolution of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, we are writing to urge you to include the Seward Highway improvements from Girdwood to Anchorage/Potter Marsh in the State Transportation Improvement Plan. For safety reasons we strongly advocate upgrading this segment to a four lane divided grade highway design.

This segment of the Seward Highway is the deadliest in the state, with a long history of horrible accidents, many involving the citizens of our small community. While regular users of this stretch of highway are all touched in some way by memories of accidents, our small town has had a very constant impact from these deaths and accidents. The road has few places to pass and many areas with limited visibility. Other issues include fallen rocks, snow slides, humans or animals on limited shoulders, and insufficient parking and pullouts for scenic viewing and emergency use. These problems are aggravated by frequent high winds, blowing rain and snow, visitor use in the summer and large commercial vehicle traffic year round. When accidents occur, the road is often closed for hours, even as long as a full day, which creates a tremendous disruption. The road generates frustration and encourages dangerous behavior. As traffic volume on the highway continues to increase these problems will become magnified.

Traffic on the Seward Highway will continue to increase. Girdwood is part of the Municipality of Anchorage, and the location of its largest block of undeveloped land. The municipal lands are currently being prepared for new residential and recreational use. A new hotel and other development are being planned for Girdwood. Girdwood's importance to tourism is growing.

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Alaska DOT/PF
Tolley and Otteson
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The Kenai Peninsula is also growing and all traffic between Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula, whether freight or automobiles, must go between Anchorage and Girdwood. The road will experience growing traffic volume, with related problems.

Where the SOADOT is on notice of these constant and often deadly issues, there can be no doubt that at some point design issues will be examined publicly. Please alleviate these problems and deaths and avoid an examination of what could have been done by including the Seward highway improvements in the State Transportation Plan.

Now is the time to take a proactive stance to deal with the problems occurring on the Seward Highway. A four lane divided grade highway is vastly safer than a highway with three lane passing zones, and if designed correctly at the outset the incremental cost will be minimized.

Thank you for your consideration.

Girdwood Board of Supervisors


Tracey Knutson
Chair

Cc: Mr. David Post, AK DOT/PF – Hand delivered
State Rep. Mike Hawker – Faxed and mailed
State Sen. Con Bunde – Faxed and mailed
Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich – Faxed and mailed
Anchorage Assembly Janice Shamberg – Faxed and mailed
Anchorage Assembly Chris Birch – Faxed and mailed
Governor Murkowski – Faxed and mailed